

year, put it in place in the statute book, and let this agriculture sector of ours, which has become so productive and so important to our national pride, continue to flourish and to do so in an environment of partnership with the Federal Government to make sure that it continues to be a successful part of our national economy.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I came to the floor to speak about a number of issues. I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to proceed for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FARM PROGRAM

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, the statement by the Senator from Mississippi is absolutely correct. I do not agree with the conclusion that we ought to include the provisions that were in the last Balanced Budget Act as to the next farm plan, but I certainly agree with him that this Congress owes a decision on what kind of a farm program we will have for the family farmers in this country—not just the family farmers, but especially for them—for the lenders, for the agribusinesses that rely on them. They need to understand as they head toward spring planting what kind of a farm program do we have in this country.

We did not enact a 5-year farm plan last year. There are a lot of reasons for that. We do owe them, it seems to me, a response; if nothing else, an expanded and accelerated debate now to try to figure out what we could agree on for a decent farm program. I support that, although the Senate will not be in session with votes for some days and some weeks, perhaps, so that may not be possible.

It will be my intention tomorrow to introduce a piece of legislation in the Senate to extend the current farm program for 1 year and provide some additional flexibility for planting decisions by farmers in that extension and, additionally, to provide forgiveness for some of the advance deficiency payments for those farmers who suffered a crop failure last year.

I do not necessarily think the best solution is to extend the previous farm program or the current farm program, but it is a solution that is preferable to doing nothing. I do believe we owe an answer to farmers, to their lenders, to agribusinesses and others, and I appreciate the Senator from Mississippi raising the issue.

All of us have a responsibility to work together to provide some certainty. My best guess is that the way to provide certainty at this point would be to extend the current farm program for 1 year, then during this year to have a substantial debate about what kind of farm policy we want in the future, for Republicans and Democrats to reach some consensus and agreement, and then move forward with it.

Again, I share most of the issues and concerns expressed by the Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DORGAN. I am happy to yield to the Senator.

Mr. COCHRAN. Will the Senator yield for a response?

Mr. DORGAN. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. COCHRAN. I appreciate the kind comments of the Senator from North Dakota. I just want to say, too, I agree with him that some changes are indicated. We just do not want the status quo. I think we can do better than the status quo. There is too much insistence on the status quo right now from the administration on a number of subject areas, vetoing a number of initiatives for change and for improvement of programs.

We have some very good improvements in the agriculture programs included in that Balanced Budget Act, and to just say that we are not going to consider that I think would be a big mistake. So I was heartened by the comments the Senator made about the fact that he would suggest in his legislation changes for more flexibility, for more sensitivity to the realities of the current situation in agriculture. We have had a lot of changes. We have had higher commodity prices in a number of areas. But we do need to get on with it.

I applaud the Senator and assure him that my interest, this Senator's interest, is working in a positive way to reach agreement so we can put it in place. I am glad he is going to introduce legislation along that line.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I have never indicated that I do not believe there are changes that are necessary. There are changes needed. The current farm program is frightfully complicated. It has the Government hip deep in trying to tell farmers where to plant, what to plant, and when to plant. We can have, in my judgment, a much better farm program that has much greater flexibility for producers.

I do not like the so-called Freedom To Farm Act in terms of where it leaves us after 7 years, because my fear is we are in a situation, then, where there is no safety net at all and when international prices drop and stay down, family farmers just get washed away. That is my major concern. But there are some aspects of the plan that was put in the reconciliation bill which I could support. Flexibility is one of them. So I hope we can get together and have a thoughtful debate and do this the right way. Republicans and Democrats can join hands here and reach a common solution.

A BUDGET COMPROMISE

Mr. DORGAN. I did want to mention a couple of other points on the floor today. This is a new year. It is January. I hope all of us have thought

through some New Year's resolutions, one of which ought to be for all of us in the Congress, both in the House and the Senate, and for all of us on both sides of the political aisle, to see if we cannot, in 1996, solve problems rather than create problems.

It has been a year in which we have had shutdowns, threatened defaults, and chaos, and a year in which there were days when this looked a lot more like a food fight than it did serious legislating in the U.S. Congress. I think most of us coming back would believe it would serve the country's interests if there were less rancor, if there were a little more understanding, and if we turned down the volume just a bit.

It does not mean that these are not very important issues that are being debated. But it does mean you cannot, in a democracy, create a situation where you say, "Here is the way we approach our legislative duties. You are all wrong, and we are all right." That does not make sense. That is not the way it works. One side is not all right and the other side is not all wrong. There are good ideas on both sides of the political aisle. But you cannot, in this process, say it is all or nothing, it is our way or no way, and we have seen too much of that in 1995.

Both political parties, in my judgment, contribute to the well-being of this country. I have said it a dozen times and I will say it again: The Republicans do this country a service by advancing and continuing to push on the issue of Federal deficits. The Democrats do a service to this country by saying, yes, let us balance the budget, let us deal with the deficit, but let us also worry about the priorities, let us worry about a program like Medicare, which is important to low-income elderly people in this country. Both sides do us a service. But we ought to, it seems to me, be willing to engage in more thoughtful discussion about how we get the best from each rather than ending up with the worst of both.

Most of all, we ought not be in a circumstance in January 1996, again, in which we see another Government shutdown. That, it seems to me, pokes taxpayers in the eye by saying to taxpayers, "We are going to insist you pay for work that we prevent from being completed," and dangles Federal workers out there on the end of a string saying, "You are the pawns in this dispute we have about the Federal budget."

The majority leader talked about the budget debate. He did so, in my judgment, in very thoughtful terms. I just want to respond to a couple of points.

If you simply took the offers of the Republicans and the Democrats that were last laid on the table in these negotiations and said we will accept the least savings in each of these categories offered by either Republicans or Democrats, and just took the lowest amount of savings from each proposal, you end up in 7 years with \$711 billion in savings. That is sufficient to balance the budget, if you simply take the